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Arends' Note Cites Reports
That Military Is Ignored

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Another influential member of Congress has expressed concern to the Secretary of Defense about reports that the Joint Chiefs of Staff are being bypassed or ignored.

Representative Leslie C. Arends of Illinois, ranking Republican on the House Armed Services Committee and minority whip, recently wrote to Secretary Robert S. McNamara in defense of the Joint Chiefs. He said he feared that military advice was being minimized or degraded. Mr. McNamara replied with a denial that the Joint Chiefs were being bypassed or that military advice was being ignored.

The exchange of letters between Mr. Arends and the Secretary, which became known this week, emphasizes the concern expressed by some about developments in the Pentagon since Mr. McNamara assumed office.

The House Appropriations Committee, in a recent report on the 1962 military budget, criticized severely trends toward centralization and some Pentagon procedures.

Vinson's Letter Recalled

Earlier, Representative Carl Vinson, Democrat of Georgia, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, wrote Mr. McNamara, noting that the law "clearly provides" that each service be separately administered.

He expressed concern about the administration of the Pentagon and emphasized that each of the service secretaries was responsible for the administration of his department and was not to be bypassed.

Mr. McNamara's reply assured Mr. Vinson that the service secretaries would not be bypassed. But Mr. Vinson emphasized his concern by writing another letter to the Secretary and meeting with him.

These feelings of uneasiness have been exacerbated in some instances because members of some Congressional committees dealing with the Pentagon, or their staffs, believe that they have not been kept as fully informed about plans and programs in the services as in prior Administrations.

Other News Reports

Mr. Arends' letter referred to newspaper reports that civilian, rather than military, opinion was being stressed in the Pentagon, and that the Joint Chiefs were being downgraded, disregarded or given too little time to prepare opinions.

He defended the Joint Chiefs as the best military system for sound decision-making. He also expressed concern about the size of the office of the Secretary of Defense.

In his response, Mr. McNamara stressed his meetings with the Joint Chiefs and the service secretaries. He declared that he had continued and expanded the practice of sitting with the Joint Chiefs at their meetings. And he characterized the Joint Chiefs as sincere, experienced, patriotic and intelligent men. He said he considered it an honor to be associated with the chiefs.

Mr. McNamara denied that the office of the Secretary of Defense had been expanded. He said the civilian staff had been reduced from about 2,000 in June, 1952, to approximately 1,400. He gave no figures for the military staff.